

NCA
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BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5554
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ARAB DISARRAY

ANNCR:

IN THE AFTERMATH OF PRESIDENT SADAT'S VISIT TO ISRAEL, RELATIONS AMONG ARAB STATES APPEAR TO BE IN A STATE OF DISARRAY. DOUGLAS ROBERTS HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT FROM CAIRO.

VOICE:

WHEN ARAB LABOR LEADERS GATHERED FOR A SIX-DAY CONFERENCE IN KUWAIT EARLIER THIS MONTH, SOME OBSERVERS WERE PREDICTING THAT POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS MIGHT, TO SOME EXTENT, MAR THE PROCEEDINGS. THAT TURNED OUT TO BE AN UNDERSTATEMENT. THE EGYPTIAN DELEGATION WALKED OUT OF THE CONFERENCE AFTER THE LEADER OF THE PAN-ARAB FEDERATION MADE A BITTER ATTACK ON PRESIDENT SADAT'S PEACE MOVES. THE SUDANESE AND MAURITANIAN DELEGATES ALSO LEFT, BUT AS AN EXPRESSION OF SOLIDARITY WITH EGYPT. AFTER A SQUABBLE WITH SYRIAN REPRESENTATIVES, THE IRAQI DELEGATION ALSO LEFT THE CONFERENCE HALL. AND BY THE TIME THE MEETING WAS OVER, THE REMAINING DELEGATES HAD DECIDED TO TRANSFER THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE FEDERATION FROM BAGDHAD TO DAMACCUS -- LESS THAN THREE MONTHS AFTER IT WAS REMOVED FROM CAIRO.

THE LABOR FEDERATION WRANGLING SEEMED INDICATIVE OF THE CURRENT STATE OF INTER-ARAB TIES AS PRESIDENT SADAT'S UNILATERAL DRIVE FOR AN ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE SETTLEMENT ENTERS ITS FOURTH MONTH. LAST DECEMBER, SYRIA, LIBYA, ALGERIA, SOUTH YEMEN AND THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION FORMED WHAT THEY CALLED "THE FRONT OF STEADFASTNESS" TO RESIST THE EGYPTIAN LEADER'S CONTACTS WITH ISRAEL. MISTER SADAT RETALIATED

IMMEDIATELY BY BREAKING OFF DIPLOMATIC TIES WITH THE FOUR STATES. IRAQ, TOO, OPPOSES THE EGYPTIAN MOVE AND CAIRO ALSO BROKE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH BAGDHAD. BUT IRAQ DID NOT JOIN THE ANTI-SADAT FRONT BECAUSE THE OTHER MEMBERS LED BY SYRIA, REFUSED TO REJECT OUTRIGHT THE IDEA OF A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT.

A LOOK AT THE FINAL COMMUNIQUE OF THE LAST SUMMIT CONFERENCE OF THE ANTI-SADAT FRONT HELD IN ALGIERS REVEALS OTHER DIVERGENCIES IN THE ARAB WORLD. THERE WAS A CONDEMNATION OF FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN THE WESTERN SAHARA, AFTER IT WAS UNDOUBTEDLY INSERTED AT THE BEHEST OF ALGERIA WHICH SUPPORTS THE GUERRILLA MOVEMENT FIGHTING FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE FORMER SPANISH TERRITORY AGAINST MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA. AND APPARENTLY AT THE URGING OF SOUTH YEMEN, THE ALGIERS SUMMIT ALSO CONDEMNED THE PRESENCE OF FOREIGN TROOPS IN OMAN, WHERE IRANIAN FORCES HELPED PUT DOWN A REBELLION OPENLY SUPPORTED BY THE SOUTH YEMENI GOVERNMENT. NOT SURPRISINGLY, MOROCCO AND OMAN ARE AMONG THE STRONGEST ARAB SUPPORTERS OF PRESIDENT SADAT'S INITIATIVE. AND, WITH OPEN BACKING FROM SUDAN AND, TO A LESSER EXTENT, FROM JORDAN AND TUNISIA, CAIRO IS BY NO MEAN ISOLATED IN THE ARAB WORLD.

SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT, AND THE OTHER OIL-RICH STATES OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA HAVE NOT PUBLICLY TAKEN SIDES IN THE DISPUTE BETWEEN MISTER SADAT AND HIS CRITICS. MOST ANALYSTS AGREE THAT THE OIL-PRODUCING STATES SEE THEIR REGIONAL INTERESTS IN TERMS OF STABILITY AND COOPERATION IN THE ARAB WORLD. AND THUS, THEY ARE PLAYING THE MOST ACTIVE ALBEIT BEHIND-THE-SCENE ROLE IN EFFORTS TO PROMOTE A RECONCILIATION.

ARAB DIPLOMATS WITH LONG EXPERIENCE IN THE REGION SAY PREVIOUS INTER-ARAB SQUABBLES HAVE BEEN JUST AS INTENSE AS

THE PRESENT ROUND OF DISPUTES. THESE DIPLOMATS BELIEVE THAT MOST ARAB STATES REALIZE IT IS ULTIMATELY IN THEIR BEST INTEREST TO WORK TOGETHER. AND THEY POINT OUT THAT PREDICTABLY ENOUGH, THE FIRST ITEM ON THE AGENDA AT NEXT MONTH'S ARAB LEAGUE CONFERENCE DEALS WITH EFFORTS TO PROMOTE ARAB SOLIDARITY.

JS/PY